



City of Bloomington Environmental Commission

The mission of the Environmental Commission is to advise the City of Bloomington on how its actions and policies may preserve and enhance the quality of Bloomington's environment, including the life-supporting processes that natural ecological systems provide to humans and other organisms.

MINUTES

26 March 2015, 7–9 p.m.

City Hall – McCloskey Room, 401 North Morton Street

1. Introductions

Present: Dedaimia Whitney, Kriste Lindberg, Linda Thompson, Diane Jung, Chaim Julian, David Parkhurst, Dave Debikey, Mike Litwin, Alicia Reinersman, David Cohen

Absent: Carrie Albright, Sean Gorman

Guests: Andrea Jobe, Bloomington Commission on Sustainability (BCOS); John Smith, concerned citizen; Andy Marrs, concerned citizen

- Andrew Carty resigned, and Mike Litwin took the role of Vice Chair for the EC.

2. Approval of minutes

- Unanimous passage of February minutes

3. Public comment

Andrea Jobe

Andrea sent the draft plastic bag ordinance to the EC. To gain necessary local statistics and impact factors, BYBB is seeking feedback and support from various organizations in Bloomington. BYBB developed an education outreach subcommittee. This subcommittee is working with a hero versus villain concept (i.e., the bag monster versus the reusable bag fairy) to highlight the benefits of reusable bags.

BYBB had a general meeting at 5:30pm on Monday, April 6th in the Monroe County Public Library. BYBB also plans to take the ordinance to City Council in May following the primary elections.

Jana McGee replaced Molly O'Donnell as a co-chair of the Bloomington Commission on Sustainability (BCOS). A new Commission member is taking on the Star Report as her primary project. The commission will be tackling one project per month. This month, BCOS is focusing on the economy and jobs. Next month, they'll be focusing on the built environment.

The Monroe County Energy Challenge task of the month for March was sealing large air leaks. April's task of the month is replacing seven incandescent bulbs with fluorescent or LED bulbs. 7 to 10 AmeriCorps fellows will be coming to Bloomington to help with the Energy Challenge in September, and they need housing for 10 weeks. Contact Andrea about any housing suggestions.

John Smith

Approximately a month and a half ago, John S. filed a public information request, seeking the City of Bloomington's current polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) data. At the EC meeting, he inquired about the status of PCB data gathering. The EC informed him about the required legal process involved in making documents available to the public. John Langley, the Deputy Director of the City of Bloomington's Utilities Department must sort through the data and give those documents to the City's Legal Department for public release approval.

In the meantime, John L. placed a CD-ROM in the public library, containing available PCB testing reports up to 2010.

John S. expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of post-2010 PCB information and the type of data presented in the available reports. More specifically, he noted that the reports only contain effluent data; he wants influent data to be more readily available, so Bloomington residents can better-understand the state of the environment. According to Smith, Thomas Alcamo, a Remedial Project Manager for the United States Environmental Protection Agency, admits that the Lemon Lane Landfill still emits 1,000 ppm of PCBs. John S. expressed concern about this information not being readily available to the public. Furthermore, Smith noted that the Illinois Central Spring Water Treatment Plant only receives water from one source, and stormwater from Lemon Lane flows in several directions. He wants PCB data from these other sources. To aid in this research, Dedaimia requested that Smith send her a list of documents he wants.

Following the PCB presentation, John S. listed numerous quotations from the *Herald Times*, demonstrating the longevity and enormity of the PCB issue in Bloomington. Smith articulated that the “whole history alludes to a sense of systematic corruption,” especially given studies started showing the adverse effects of PCB exposure as early as 1937. David P. gave Smith a list of cancer studies provided by George Haggeman, demonstrating Bloomington does not have the excessive cancer cases that are typically associated with PCB exposure.

4. Old business

a. PCB fact finding report (10 min: David Cohen)

- David C. provided a background on PCBs, the EPA Superfund cleanup sites in Bloomington, and articulated that a new 5-year review will be released this May. David C. will contact the *Herald Times* to ensure the public gets notified about the upcoming review.
- To see the full presentation, go to: https://docs.google.com/a/bloomington.in.gov/presentation/d/1I_TOYx6pZ2rr6-Drs5oOdRNAfFufnUJMt95nKNuGhjw/edit?usp=sharing.

b. Climate Action Plan (10 min: Andrew, Alicia)

- Alicia held two subcommittee meetings to discuss the outline. She now has revised the outline and will be sending it to the EC shortly. She plans on holding another meeting in a couple weeks to discuss the full draft.

c. 2015 curbside recycling project (10 min: Dedaimia)

To begin the curbside recycling project, Dedaimia has been assembling a team. In this process, Dedaimia contacted the manager of the downtown recycling center behind City Hall, Chad Roeder, and Justin Ross, a specialist in Public Finance at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA). Ross articulated an interest in creating a capstone course, allowing his students to study the economics of recycling in Bloomington. A financial analysis of Bloomington’s recycling program would provide a good foundation to a proposal seeking recycling program expansion.

c. Committee assignments (5 min)

Most committee assignments involve liaising with other groups in Bloomington with similar mission statements to the EC. The purpose of this discussion was to determine which groups are essential to the EC and which assignments can be safely removed. Dedaimia compiled a list of currently assigned and similarly focused groups to discuss, and she created a voluntary sign-up sheet committing EC members to regularly attend these meetings.

- Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Commission: EC members usually do not attend these meetings, but Dave will take this assignment.
- Bloomington Commission on Sustainability (BCOS): Dedaimia agreed to attend these meetings but would also like another EC member to serve as an alternate.
- Tree Commission: Dedaimia will continue to attend these meetings.
- Environmental Resources Advisory Council: this advisory council for the City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation Department deals with several environmental issues (e.g., the Switchyard Park and Bryan Park). Mike usually attends these meetings, but David P. agreed to take on the assignment.

- Imagine Bloomington Steering Committee: This group was drafting the updated *Growth Policies Plan* for the City. As a result of the City government's reorganization last year, however, this group has not met in over a year and has no meetings scheduled in the near future.
- Bloomington/Monroe County Metropolitan Organization Citizens Advisory Committee (MPO CAC): Chaim attends these meetings, but he feels discussions have not been of much significance to the EC lately. Chaim believes the EC can remove the MPO CAC from the assignment list.
- Monroe County Environmental Commission: Diane and Kriste will attend these meetings, alternating months.
- Monroe County Solid Waste Management Department Citizens Advisory Committee (MCSWMD CAC): Chaim agreed to take this assignment instead of the MPO CAC.
- Planning Commission: EC members used to attend these meetings when development petitions with environmental significance were on the agenda.

5. New business

- Bring Your Bag Bloomington (5 min: Dave Debikey)
 - BYBB drafted an ordinance, proposing a plan to slowly reduce and potentially eliminate single-use plastic bags. The plan also calls for reducing paper bag consumption.
 - The plan encourages stores to make reusable bags affordable and requires a \$0.15 charge per single-use plastic bag, serving as an incentive for businesses and disincentive for consumers.
 - Reusable plastic bags are defined in the ordinance as being 2 mils thick (i.e., standard retail shopping bag thickness) or thicker.
 - Farmers' Markets will be exempt from the plastic bag ban since it could create a hardship for the vendors.
 - Reusable bags that meet the requirements of this ordinance may be distributed without charge during BYBB promotional events.
 - Dave will inform BYBB that the EC plans to write a letter to City Council in support of the ordinance.
- Meeting time – Doodle poll (5 min: Dedaimia)
 - In response to requests to reconsider monthly EC meeting days and times, Dedaimia will create a Doodle poll asking commissioners to identify times in the week when they are routinely available. This tool will help determine whether EC meetings should be changed to increase commissioner participation.
- Commissioner hat exercise (10 min: Dedaimia)
 - Dedaimia created an exercise to help commissioners determine situations in which they should represent the EC or themselves. Commissioners and members of the public were organized into groups and presented with scenarios. Through discussion, each group drew conclusions about whether they should wear their "commissioner hat" or "personal hat" and presented those conclusions to all hat exercise participants.

6. Committee reports & commissioner announcements

- Planning Comm & Sr. Environmental Planner (15 min: Linda)
Bill Brown Fullerton Pike
 - Topsoil will be removed from cleared lots to sell to the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) for the Cloverleaf at Fullerton Pike.
 - This property has the following environmental concerns: sinkholes, forests, steep slopes and riparian buffers. Areas on the property affected by these issues will be avoided.
 - There are two sinkholes at the top of the hill on this property, and more sinkholes might be unearthed. City regulations do not address subsurface sinkholes.
 - The Environmental Commission Planning Committee (ECPC) wants a full karst survey of his property to determine how topsoil removal will affect water flow. Developers are not permitted to diminish water flow into existing sinkholes.
 - The ECPC also wants a soil scientist to evaluate the site and determine what it would be like following topsoil removal.

- b. L4L Natural Landscaping (5 min: Diane)
 - The Master Gardener Show was on March 28th.
 - Diane will not be able to attend some upcoming Saturday Farmers' Markets and needs somebody to take her L4L shifts.
 - Diane also will not be able to contribute to the Eco Heroes event and would like someone to cover that shift as well.
 - Bug Fest will be on Saturday, June 26th. Due to the size and scope of this event, Diane wants some assistance from the Commission.
 - The Monroe County Stormwater group wants to collaborate with the EC in L4L and appear on the sign as a sponsor. The sign's current design makes the Monroe County Stormwater group look like the most prominent sponsor of LFL. The sign will be revised to correct this issue.
- c. Tree Commission (5 min: Dedaimia)
 - The retired accountant who presented the ash borer information at the last Tree Commission meeting completed a cost-benefit analysis of emerald ash borer treatment. He found a way for the City to treat ash trees for under \$50 per tree.
 - The City is considering buying its own equipment and providing its own ash borer treatments. Before this decision can be made, however, the City must first understand the training process to work this equipment and administer the treatments.
- d. MPO CAC (5 min: Chaim)
 - The Democracy for Monroe County group met to discuss transportation and a transit improvement project involving INDOT.
 - While brainstorming ways to increase bus ridership, Chaim suggested an advertising campaign, saying something to the effect of the following: "Don't like parking meters? Ride the bus, and forget about them."
- e. Eco Heroes (5 min: David C)
 - April 10th is the submission deadline for Eco Heroes.
 - Eco Heroes has not received the expected level of sponsorship and funding. Since only 6 businesses have agreed to sponsor the event, David C. will follow-up with potential sponsors via phone, email, and personal visits.
 - To raise awareness of the Eco Heroes event, David C. designed a poster and has been hanging them throughout the community.
- f. ERAC (5 min: Mike)
 - ERAC did not have a meeting.
- g. BCOS (5 min: Dedaimia)
 - Mike attended this meeting and listened to a presentation by Danise Alano-Martin on the City's economic sustainability program and the update of the *Star Communities* report.
 - The City's Certified Technology Park plan is on the City's website for viewing. The master plan of the park includes artist renditions of the park's final appearance.
 - The City plans to consolidate 5 of its tax increment financing (TIF) districts into a single district. This change will allow the City to issue bonds for several projects in many districts with one overhead.
- Chaim: Democracy for Monroe County held candidate forums on Monday, March 30th and Tuesday, March 31st at 7:00pm. In the Monday meeting held in Public Library Auditorium, three mayoral candidates and uncontested City Clerk and City Council spoke. On Tuesday, in the City Council Chambers, all contested candidates for City Council spoke.
- David C. suggested that the EC create a Facebook or Twitter page. Upon going to a vote, David P. abstained. This topic will be put on the next agenda after considering standard legal practice and the ordinance.

Meeting times

- a. Environmental Commission: 16 April, 7:00 McCloskey Room
- b. Planning Committee: 1 April, 4:00, Lemon Room & 16 April, 4:00, Lemon Room
- c. Tree Commission: 15 April, 9:30 Rose Hill
- d. BCOS meeting: 14 April, 6:00 McCloskey
- e. County Environmental Quality & Sus. Commission: 8 April,
- f. ERAC: 8 April: 4:30 Winslow Park
- g. MPO Citizens Advisory Committee: 29 April, 6:30 McCloskey

7. Adjournment